How Beautiful My Brethren and Sistren

Derek Walcott

Life and Work

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How Beautiful My Brethren and Sistren
Derek Walcott, Life and Work

AN EXHIBITION

by Jennifer Toews

Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library, University of Toronto

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In the autumn of 1995, Ted Chamberlin and I travelled to Boston. Our trip coincided with the Boston Antiquarian Book Fair, but the real purpose of our visit was to view the collection of archival papers accumulated by Derek Walcott over the course of his illustrious literary and artistic career which has included the Nobel Prize for Literature, awarded in 1992. I had never met Derek Walcott, but he was an old friend of Ted, and, of course, I knew of *Omeros*, his great poem and most influential work. We met him at his house and I spent a day going through his papers, rather superficially, as there were a lot of them. I was surprised and delighted by the number of watercolour sketches for costume and set designs for his plays and only then realized that he had founded the Trinidad Theatre Workshop, whose papers the Fisher Library subsequently acquired.

There was no question about whether we should attempt to get this collection, and we set about to find sources of funding with the help of the individuals and Foundations acknowledged by Jennifer in her text. In 1997 Ted and I again called on Derek and his partner Sigrid, this time in New York to where they had moved, and, after some negotiation, arrived at a mutually satisfactory price for the archive and the records of future literary work. We felt pleased with ourselves and went out for a very good dinner, finishing with cognac at the Oak Bar.

It is now a privilege and pleasure to present this exhibition, so ably curated by Jennifer Toews, and to welcome the scholars and students to the Fisher Library to revel in the wonders of another great academic resource of the University of Toronto.

Richard Landon, Director, Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library

I first met Derek Walcott in 1989, when I went with his old friend Ron Bryden to the first production of Derek's play about the Ghost Dance of the plains Sioux at Hartwick College in upstate New York. But I had been writing about his poetry since the 1970s, and was in his native St. Lucia when it celebrated independence in 1979. I remember reviewing *Sea Grapes* for the *Hudson Review* around that time, a book in which he brought together in a refreshingly new way the ancient figures of the poet as maker, shaping ideal worlds, and as diviner, locating sources of inspiration in the everyday. But there was something more there, something that gave his people's suffering an island sanctity; and for over six decades he has sung a praise song to their struggle, and to his own, in the soaked-in-salt languages of the West Indies. This exhibition bears witness to that achievement.

In 1993, after helping to arrange his visit as the Northrop Frye Professor in the Centre for Comparative Literature and taking a line of his poetry as the title of my book, *Come Back to Me My Language: Poetry and the West Indies*, I wrote – with a cheerful "good luck" from Richard Landon and Carole Moore – to ask whether he would consider making his manuscripts and other literary material available for purchase by the University of Toronto. To our delight, he *was* interested – the reputation of the Fisher Library and the University of Toronto figured largely in this, as did the enthusiastic West Indian community in Toronto and, old-fashioned though it might seem, the shared imperial and commonwealth histories of Canada and the West Indies. The question of whether it was appropriate to bring such an important archive out of the West Indies was much on our minds, reinforced by a first refusal that had been given by Derek earlier to the University of the West Indies, which already held some of his work in libraries on the Mona and St. Augustine campuses. But their resources, both financial and custodial, were limited; and we all knew that if something did not happen at either the University of the West Indies or the University of Toronto, the Walcott papers would go to one of the major American universities, which were already tripping over each other to get the collection of the latest Nobel laureate in literature.

Sir Alister McIntyre, at the time Vice-Chancellor of the University of the West Indies, was involved in discussions from the beginning, and although he would have dearly loved to bring the material home, he realized that was not going to happen. He was particularly anxious that Derek not lose an opportunity for the financial returns that he both deserved and needed from his career. So with considerable flak from his academic and librarian colleagues, as well as from his university's lawyers, he supported our initiative by waiving the University of the West Indies' rights to Derek's material in favour of the University of Toronto. Without Sir Alister's decision to do so, and the eventual support of his disappointed colleagues (including Edward Baugh, still the most important scholar of Derek's work), this could not have happened; and it should be noted that when his successor, the late Rex Nettleford, came to Toronto in November, 1999, for the formal announcement and opening of the collection, he too was enormously generous in his praise of the Fisher Library and the University of Toronto for keeping the collection within the wider West Indian family. Accordingly, it was described from the beginning as the University of Toronto/University of the West Indies collection, with that formality accompanied by a commitment to make material available to colleagues in the West Indies on a priority basis. And there was a good frame-

work for this. The University of Toronto and the University of the West Indies had a formal agreement, negotiated and signed in 1993, which sponsored a very wide range of collaborations and exchanges to take advantage of academic strengths on both sides, and that certainly helped. Finally, early financial support from the McLean Foundation, by Avie and Bev Bennett, and by other individuals and organizations was crucial, as was the word of Ron Bryden, who encouraged Derek to do the deal, and of Carole Moore, who agreed to it.

But at the end of the day, as with so much at the Fisher Library, it could not have come to pass without Richard Landon. The actual dealing involved him and me and a trip to New York, where in the living room of his apartment in Greenwich Village, on 18 October 1997, after intense negotiations that took up all the time it takes to drink a cup of tea, Derek handwrote his agreement. He had never met anyone quite like Richard. Nobody has. The deal was done.

It is worth noting that our acquisition of the Walcott collection has brought important new material to the Fisher Library, including the complete archive of the Trinidad Theatre Workshop, arguably the most important cultural institution of the last half century in the Caribbean, which Derek founded and which came to the Fisher through his intercession.

But back to the Walcott collection. The details were quickly worked out; and all that was left was to get the existing material to Toronto. This deal included all future material, so it is still coming, thanks to the scrupulous and scholarly custodial work of Derek's partner, Sigrid Nama. The Irish say that scholars and poets – at their best – are fellow travelers; and so are Derek and Sigrid, bless them both. By the spring of 1998, Derek and Sigrid were back in Boston, where he was teaching at Boston University. Some material was still in St. Lucia, but the bulk of it was with them in Boston. I suggested, in a moment of cavalier bravado, that I would drive down and pick it up, since Richard and I were anxious about entrusting it to FedEx, good though that company is. What made me think that I and my Subaru sedan would be a better bet is beyond me now. But I did; and I drove to Boston, stayed overnight with Derek and Sigrid, and at six the next morning we began loading the car. By the time we were finished the truck was full, the back seat was packed to the top, and so was the passenger seat, so much so that I didn't have use of the handbrake and had to juggle a box every time I shifted into high gear.

Fortunately, on the interstate, that did not happen too often, for I drove non-stop from Boston to Buffalo. I was nervous about fire. Don't ask me how many times you see a car on fire on the interstate, but I *did* have a bad dream the day before I left for Boston, and I took along a small fire extinguisher . . . one just big enough, I realized later, for a small campfire. I stopped once for gas – at a self-serve, so I could put out the flames myself – picked up a take-out snack which I balanced on the little space there was still on the dashboard, and was off to the border.

I was really nervous, with more justification, about the border. I knew that eventually the material would be allowed into Canada, but I did not want to leave the car in bond, since that would defeat the whole purpose of my trip. So I rehearsed my script for the eight hours of the drive. I didn't want to say anything that wasn't true; but I also had in mind a line of Seamus Heaney's from the troubles in Northern Ireland; whatever you say, say nothing.

There was very little traffic when I arrived at the border in early afternoon, and I drove straight up to the open booth, thankfully not having to wait in queue for a half hour worrying about whether I had chosen the right line. The Canadian border agent leaned out, looked at me, and looked in the car.

A live one, he must have thought. "What do you have in there?", he asked, pointed to the twenty or so boxes in the back and front seats (with ten or twelve more he couldn't see in the trunk.) "Papers," I said (leaving out the fact that there were books, storyboards, watercolour paintings, and a whole bunch of valuable, but unclassifiable (except by Jennifer Toews!) odds and ends. (With my fallback script memorized, I didn't say there *weren't* any of those things.) "What are they for," he asked. "For research," I said. "I work on them" (which was sort of true.) "You work on all those?" he said, with a look that brought to mind the unibomber. I said nothing. "Open that box right beside you," he demanded. I saw his right hand go down to what I assume was a red button as I twisted in my seat and slipped off the cover of the closest box, having no idea what was inside. I prayed it was just papers. It was, at least down a few inches, which was all he could see. He got out of the booth – feeling safer, I presume because both my hands were in sight, pulling out papers with manic delight – and looked at a couple of manuscript pages, drafts of *O Babylon*. Then he slipped back to his booth, mumbling "they're all like that?" and then once again, with feeling "you work on those?" And then "get out of here. Quickly, please." Finally, as I turned the key in the ignition, he said with a kind of gracious sadness, "You know you're crazy, don't you?" I drove faster than I should have out of the terminal, up the road, and onto the loading docks at the Robarts Library.

So the material arrived into the safe hands of Richard Landon and Anne Dondertman. But then the real work of organizing and describing the collection began, undertaken with exceptional grace and rare skill by Jennifer Toews, who has provided us all with new insight into the work of one of the world's great writers. This exhibition, with its extraordinary range and rigorous discipline, is a testament to her achievement, as well as to Derek Walcott's.

Ted Chamberlin
Professor of English and Comparative Literature
University of Toronto

HOW BEAUTIFUL MY BRETHREN AND SISTREN: DEREK WALCOTT, LIFE AND WORK

The University of Toronto and the University of the West Indies have enjoyed a long-standing relationship, involving exchanges of students, faculty and ideas. The Fisher Library acquired the first significant portion of the Derek Walcott papers in 1997, as the result of a complex effort on the part of Richard Landon, the Director of the Fisher Library, Carole Moore, Chief Librarian at the University of Toronto (recently retired), Professor J. Edward Chamberlin, Professor of English and Comparative Literature, President of the University of Toronto (at the time) J. Robert S. Prichard, the McLean Foundation, the Jessie Ball duPont Fund, Sir Alister McIntyre, Vice Chancellor of the University of the West Indies, Mona, Jamaica and, of course, Derek Walcott.

The Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library is honoured to hold the papers of Derek Walcott which are consulted by scholars from all over the world, as well as by local students, faculty and other researchers. The papers include drafts of his poetry, prose, plays, critical works, drawings, paintings, sketches, storyboards, correspondence, and a variety of other material related to his life and work. The bulk of the material centres around work created in the 1980s and 1990s, with some from the 1970s and some more recent work. The other significant portion of his archival papers are held in St. Augustine and Mona campuses as part of the Special Collections of the Alma Jordan Library at The University of the West Indies, St. Augustine, Trinidad and Tobago, and Mona, Jamaica. Some of Walcott's earliest archival material may be found there.

The Fisher Library also holds the papers of the Trinidad Theatre Workshop, founded by Derek Walcott in 1959.

Arguably the most famous citizen of St. Lucia, Derek Alton Walcott is internationally known for his poetry, plays and prose.

Born to parents Warwick and Alix Walcott, on January 23, 1930, in Castries, St. Lucia, Derek Walcott is one of two Nobel prize recipients from the island, the other being economist Sir William Arthur Lewis (1915-1991). Walcott received the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1992 for his entire body of work and specifically for his epic poem *Omeros*.

As a youth, Walcott was trained in painting and drawing by Harold Simmons (1914-1966). Simmons is widely recognized as mentor to a generation of St. Lucian artists, writers and musicians, which include Derek Walcott, painter and muralist Dunstan St. Omer (1927-), photographer Leo St. Helene, folksinger Marie Selipha 'Sesenne' Descartes (1914–2010), and composer Charles Cadet. The most celebrated St. Lucian artist of his time, Simmons invited Walcott, Dunstan St. Omer, Leo 'Spa' St. Helene, and others to his studio and the surrounding countryside on Saturdays to paint and draw, in an effort to encourage them to absorb and learn about their native land through their artwork. These Saturday sessions were very important for the development of the young people, and contributed to St. Omer becoming the most famous painter in St. Lucia, and one of the Caribbean's leading muralists – developing his own unique style and vision, dubbed 'Prismism' by Walcott. St. Omer became known for transforming the church icons of the Roman Catholic Church into recognizable Saint Lucian figures, as well as the native Madonna and as the designer of the national flag. Leo St. Helene became an athlete and photographer, and Derek Walcott an internationally acclaimed poet and playwright. Walcott's father, Warwick, was also a painter and poet and had been a mentor and inspiration to Harold Simmons as a younger man. Simmons proved

vitally important to the development of the younger Walcott's creative talents, providing artistic training and encouragement. Warwick Walcott's untimely death from mastoiditis at the age of thirty-one left the young Derek without paternal guidance and support. Walcott's highly visual approach to his poetry and prose likely developed, in part, from these early experiences.

Walcott was educated at St. Mary's College in Castries, later becoming the first St. Lucian to be awarded a Colonial Development and Welfare Scholarship to study at the University College of the West Indies in Kingston, Jamaica, where he studied English, French and Latin, among other subjects. He then moved to Trinidad in 1953 to take up work as a teacher and writer. In 1959, Walcott established the Little Carib Theatre Workshop in Trinidad, his home for twenty-two years, which would later become the Trinidad Theatre Workshop. The Rockefeller Foundation awarded him a fellowship to study American theatre in New York City in 1957. He is the recipient of numerous awards for his work, including a Cholmondeley Award in 1969, an O'Neill Foundation-Wesleyan University Fellowship for Playwrights (1969), an Obie Award for *Dream on Monkey Mountain* in 1971, the Queen's Gold Medal for Poetry in 1988, a five-year MacArthur Foundation 'genius' award in 1981 – part of the proceeds from this award he used to start the Boston Playwrights Theatre, a Royal Society of Literature award, the 1992 Nobel Prize, the St. Lucia Medal of Honour in 2000, the 2011 T.S. Eliot Prize for *White Egrets*, the inaugural 2011 OCM Bocas Prize for Caribbean Literature – also for *White Egrets*, and many others.

Walcott describes his family background as being mostly made up of his mother, Alix Walcott, though he also had a twin brother 'Roddy' (Roderick Aldon Walcott, 1930-2000) to whom he was very close, sister Pamela and his father's sisters. The Walcotts were English-speaking Methodists, a minority in St. Lucia. While English is the official language of the island, some 95% speak Kweyol, or Creole, based on French, African languages and Carib, and are predominantly Catholic. Derek and Roddy regularly used to put on short plays with and for each other as children. The Walcott home was one filled with poetry, music and art, with mother Alix often to be found quoting poetry and singing about the house. Alix was a teacher in Castries, and though not wealthy by any standard, managed as a single parent to raise the children through teaching and sewing, while being fully supportive of their talents and dreams. According to Walcott, the presence of his father, Warwick, could be felt throughout the house despite his untimely death, as his mother spoke continually about him for the rest of her life. Many of his watercolours were on view and his poetry was always to hand in their home. The Walcott household contained a number of books by such authors as Dickens, Walter Scott, and a great deal of poetry, as well as many classical musical recordings. Walcott remembers a self-portrait in watercolour by his father which was displayed next to an oil painting of Alix, also by him. He was always very aware of his mother's grief over the loss of his father, and also her pride in him. Walcott describes his early life as giving him a strong sense of continuity in his art and writing, and of the responsibility of carrying on a tradition.

In *Tiepolo's Hound* (draft p. 8, box 12, Ms. Coll. 348) Walcott writes of Warwick:

> ...Without ever knowing my father it seems to me now
> (I thought I saw him pause in the parenthesis
>
> of our stairs once), from the blank unfurrowed brow
> of his self-portrait, that he embodied the tenderness

of water, his preferred medium, its English reticence
but also its fragile delight, like a prediction

of his own passing, its tinted mist and essence,
and the verse that made him my precocious fiction …

When he was ten years old, the headmaster of his school asked permission to read out one of his poems at a school function. Walcott's first published poem, *1944*, was printed in *The Voice of St. Lucia* when he was fourteen years old. Written from a Methodist point of view, in blank verse, elements of the religious subject matter of the poem raised the ire of a local Catholic priest who wrote to the newspaper in verse, condemning the poem as blasphemous. The young Walcott was rather surprised by this reaction to his poetry, perhaps his first, but certainly not his last experience with controversy in his life.

In 1948, at the age of eighteen, Walcott self-published his first book of poetry, *25 Poems,* initially funded by his mother at a cost of two hundred dollars. *25 Poems* was favourably reviewed by Harold Simmons in the local newspaper, *The Voice of St. Lucia*. With solid support from his mother, Harold Simmons, Barbadian writer Frank Collymore (1893-1980) and others, Walcott continued to write and publish with increasing confidence. Following *25 Poems,* he published *Epitaph for the Young: XII Cantos, Poems* and *In a Green Night: Poems, 1948-60*. *In a Green Night,* published in 1962, would bring much greater attention to his work in the English–speaking world and came to be considered the book that helped give him his 'break' into the literary world outside St. Lucia and the Caribbean. Following the success of *In a Green Night*, Walcott produced numerous books of poetry with regularity through the next decades, including *The Castaway and Other Poems* in 1965; *The Gulf and Other Poems* in 1969; the autobiographical *Another Life*

in 1973 featuring the characters 'Harry', based on Harold Simmons, and 'Gregorias', modelled on Dunstan St. Omer; *Sea Grapes* (1976); *The Star-Apple Kingdom* (1979); *The Fortunate Traveller* (1981); *Midsummer* (1984); *The Arkansas Testament* (1987); the much-lauded *Omeros* (1990) for which he won the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1992; *The Prodigal* (2004) also autobiographical, focusing on travels and reaching middle-age, combined with his memories and grief surrounding the death of his twin brother, Roddy; *The Bounty* in 1997 and *White Egrets* in 2010. *White Egrets* continues to win awards and praise, including the 2011 Eugenio Montale literary prize in Milan, Italy.

Omeros is a brilliantly conceived epic poem combining elements of classical Greek myth woven into a St. Lucian context with St. Lucian characters. Written in *terza rima*, *Omeros* focuses on a group of fishermen (a favourite character

type of Walcott's), the young woman Helen, the white couple for whom Helen works, the Plunketts and a cast of locals. The blind guide Omeros and the blind fisherman Seven Seas are both representative of a deeper type of guidance, both spiritual and psychic. Here, Seven Seas begins his day and thinks of the change in his senses since he lost his vision (*Omeros* p.11):

> '... Then he heard the first breeze
> washing the sea-almond's wares; last night there had been
> a full moon white as his plate. He saw with his ears.
>
> He warmed with the roofs as the sun began to climb.
> Since the disease had obliterated vision,
> when the sunset shook the sea's hand for the last time–
> and an inward darkness grew where the moon and sun
> indistinctly altered – he moved by a sixth sense,
> like the moon without an hour or second hand...'

And, later, he describes the community healer and spiritual leader (Omeros p. 245):

> '... One wound gibbers in the weeping
>
> mouth of the sibyl, the obeah-woman, in the swell
> of the huge white satin belly, the dark gust that bent her
> limbs till she was a tree of snakes, the spidery sibyl
>
> hanging in a sack from the cave at Cumae, the obeah
> that possessed her that the priests considered evil
> in their white satin frocks, because ants had lent her
> their language ...'

Walcott has described the creation of Omeros as "an act of gratitude for St. Lucia, the people, the weather, the life I have lived there."

Mindful of the ongoing difficulties faced by the majority of writers, in regard to money and protected time to write, Walcott founded the Rat Island Foundation as an international writers' retreat with some of his Nobel prize money in the 1990s, on an island off the coast of St. Lucia. In his 1992 Nobel address, The Antilles: Fragments of Epic Memory, Walcott speaks about the future of the Caribbean:

> '... How quickly it could all disappear! And how it is beginning to drive us further into where we hope are impenetrable places, green secrets at the end of bad roads, headlands where the next view is not of a hotel but of some long beach without a figure and the hanging question of some fisherman's smoke at its far end.

> The Caribbean is not an idyll, not to its natives. They draw their working strength from it organically, like trees, like the sea almond or the spice laurel of the heights. Its peasantry and its fishermen are not there to be loved or even photographed; they are trees who sweat, and whose bark is filmed with salt, but every day on some island, rootless trees in suits are signing favourable tax breaks with entrepreneurs, poisoning the sea almond and the spice laurel of the mountains to their roots. A morning could come in which governments might ask what happened not merely to the forests and the bays but to a whole people. They are here again, they recur, the faces, corruptible angels, smooth black skins and white eyes huge with an alarming joy, like those of the Asian children of Felicity at Ramleela; two different religions, two different continents, both filling the heart with the pain that is joy …'

Tiepolo's Hound, published in 2000, tells the life story of Impressionist painter Camille Pissarro (1830-1903) from his birth and upbringing in St. Thomas, Danish West Indies (U.S. Virgin Islands), to his emigration to Paris, France, and subsequent life and career among the French Impressionists and Neo-Impressionists. Cleverly counterbalanced with Pissarro's story is the story of Walcott's quest to locate and catch a second glimpse of a mysterious hound in a painting by Tiepolo, allowing the reader to travel with him as he searches from St. Lucia to New York City. The experience of the reader traveling with Walcott on a quest or journey is a recurring device in much of his work. There is a constant sense of 'we' as one reads through his poetry, prose and plays. Generously illustrated throughout with Walcott's own paintings, Walcott presents Pissarro as the first West Indian painter in Tiepolo's Hound. He weaves the two stories together, including their mutual love of painting, a multi-sensory approach to their work and their common beginnings in the richness of Caribbean life which informed the approach of both artists to their work. The influence of the Caribbean landscape, its fecundity, variety and the unique quality of light can be seen in Pissarro's later French Impressionist paintings, and also in many of Walcott's. Walcott describes the beginning of his quest for the hound (p. 7):

> '…On my first trip to the Modern I turned a corner,
> rooted before the ridged linen of a Cezanne.
>
> A still life. I thought how clean his brushes were!
> Across that distance light was my first lesson.
>
> I remember stairs in couplets. The Metropolitan's
> marble authority, I remember being
>
> stunned as I studied the exact expanse
> of a Renaissance feast, the art of seeing.
>
> Then I caught a slash of pink on the inner thigh
> of a white hound entering the cave of a table,
>
> so exact in its lucency at The Feast of Levi,
> I felt my heart halt …'

Then describing how Pissarro approaches his work (p. 62):

> '…While the melody of money is repeated
> With every stroke, with every signature,
>
> a tune he cannot shake from his head,
> that sings like gnats around the drying picture,
> the delight in light remains unaffected,

till even his greys have joy, his indigo,

all of that muted bliss contained in a red
rusting roof, an ochre wall, patches of snow …'

And later Walcott doubts his quest for the hound (p. 154):

'… One dawn I woke up to the gradual terror
that all I had written of the hound was false.

I had pursued a melody of error,
my craft seduced by the twin siren calls

of Memory changing to Imagination,
of Reason into Rhyme. I knew I stood

before the uproar of a feast. Its station
was Venice, unvisited. Its poles were my dark wood,

from which the hound, now a chained Cerberus,
growled
and lunged its treble heads at Accuracy …'

In the work of Walcott, the influence of the landscape and culture surrounding him at a given moment, whether in Boston, Trinidad, St. Lucia, Amsterdam, Jamaica or New York, is prevalent, almost appearing as a character within the work.

His first play, *Henri Christophe: A Chronicle in Seven Scenes*, privately printed in 1948 and performed in 1950, following the suggestion of his twin brother Roderick, was the first part of *The Haitian Trilogy,* which would include *Drums and Colours* (commissioned for the opening of the First Federal Parliament of the West Indies, April 23rd, 1958) and *The Haytian Earth*. *Henri Christophe* is the story of early Haitian leaders following the revolution which ended French colonial rule. Jean Jacques Dessalines (1758-1806) and Henri Christophe (1767-1820), originally followers of Haitian revolutionary hero Toussaint L'Ouverture (1743-1803), were engaged in a struggle to fill the power vacuum following the deportation and imprisonment of L'Ouverture in France. Walcott writes, 'The Haitian revolution, as sordidly tyrannical as so many of its subsequent regimes tragically became was an upheaval, a necessary rejection of the debasements endured under a civilized empire, that achieved independence. The revolution is as central to the plays as it is to the history of the islands.'

Also in 1950, Derek Walcott, Roderick, and others founded the St. Lucia Arts Guild to develop local and international drama. The Guild performed *Henri Christophe* that same year. Roderick would act as leader of the Guild from 1951-1967.

Ti-Jean and his Brothers, published in 1958, tells the story of a battle between three brothers and the devil being told by a bird, a cricket, a firefly and a frog.

Dream on Monkey Mountain won an Obie award in 1971 and began to attract more critical attention to Walcott as a playwright. Considered by some to be his most powerful play, *Dream on Monkey Mountain* was commissioned in 1967 by the Royal Shakespeare Company and first performed in Trinidad. The main character, Makak, has a dream that suggests he should leave his home and travel to Africa – an exploit he attempts with his friend, Moustique. There ensues a tale of magic realism and difficulties which thwart his quest. Themes of colonial and post-colonial struggles and its aftermath are prevalent – a common theme in Walcott's work.

Drama critic and writer, Ronald Bryden (1927-2004), later professor of Drama at the University of Toronto, became the

dramaturge for the Royal Shakespeare Company in London during the early 1970s. Bryden himself was born in Port of Spain, Trinidad and was a dear friend of Walcott's. Bryden was known for his sharp instincts regarding emerging playwrights, being credited with 'discovering' Tom Stoppard with his very positive and insightful review of Stoppard's *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead*. Bryden could not be said to have discovered Walcott, but he was certainly a strong supporter and honest critic of Walcott's work. During the development of the musical *Steel,* Bryden and Walcott wrote long, in-depth letters to each other discussing strengths and weaknesses of the work. A letter from Bryden in 1991, contained in the Ronald Bryden papers at the Fisher Library, discusses his ideas about *Steel* in frank detail:

> '... Anyway, I loved Steel. It was three hours of pure pleasure for me. Galt's score, like the score for the Joker, is a marvel – the flow of new melody never stops, all of it gold. The memories of Port-of-Spain, and climbing to the top of Laventille to explore the old Martello tower up there, were painfully gorgeous – Richard got the sense of those houses exactly... But what's to be done with it? It's too much – too much plot, too many characters, more songs than I can carry in my head, more subjects than a sunny Sunday at Speaker's Corner in London. Watching it in that tiny theatre, my instinct was to cut it down ruthlessly – reduce the cast by a third, throw out the piano-teacher, get rid of Roger, forget all those quests for fathers and simplify, simplify, simplify ...'

While at the Royal Shakespeare Company, Bryden commissioned Derek Walcott to write a 'Caribbeanised' version of the Don Juan story, which became *The Joker of Seville*. As a result of budget problems at the Royal Shakespeare Company, the play was not performed there as originally planned, premiering instead in Port of Spain in 1974. *The Joker of Seville* was first performed by the actors of the Trinidad Theatre Workshop.

The affectionate, joking nature of the friendship is evident in a 1965 letter from Walcott to Bryden, also from the Ronald Bryden papers:

> 'Hello, Dryden,
>
> Bryden, is it? Got you mixed up with the other chap. Used to do crits for the Elder Statesman back in Annus Mirabilis. Provincial. Never made it. Must have met him ... Who writes all that stuff for you? I mean you surely couldn't have READ ALL of Shaw's plays could you. Saw the volume in town. Would break any model's neck carrying that ...'

Canadian composer Galt MacDermot (1928-) wrote the music for The Joker of Seville, the first of several collaborations with Walcott, which would also include Steel, Marie Laveau, Walker and O Babylon! MacDermot is probably best known as the composer of the award-winning 1967 musical Hair. When asked why he would choose to work with someone like MacDermot, Walcott answers that 'any composer who loves Kitchener is fine by me.' Lord Kitchener, also known as Aldwyn Roberts (1922-2000), was one of the most famous calypsonians, especially popular among the expatriate Caribbean communities of the 1950s, originally from Arima, Trinidad. He is known for his many songs, including 'Cricket, Lovely Cricket', 'Mama dis is Mas' and 'Jump in Line' and for developing younger artists like David Rudder. Galt MacDermot's song African Waltz won a Grammy Award in 1960 and his music has been sampled by popular musicians

such as Busta Rhymes and Run DMC. In an October 10th, 1992 letter to Walcott, in which he congratulates him on winning the Nobel Prize, MacDermot discusses Steel:

> '...You have to face the fact that it is really the story of your life but transposed to a pan playing composer. Now that you've won top honors you can admit that as an artist you have tried to be a literate but at the same time a street artist and that it works ... Forget the social problems like corruption. That's old news but to create art using all your faculties and not being afraid to do it is unheard of except in certain Nobel prize winning types of which I only know one ...'

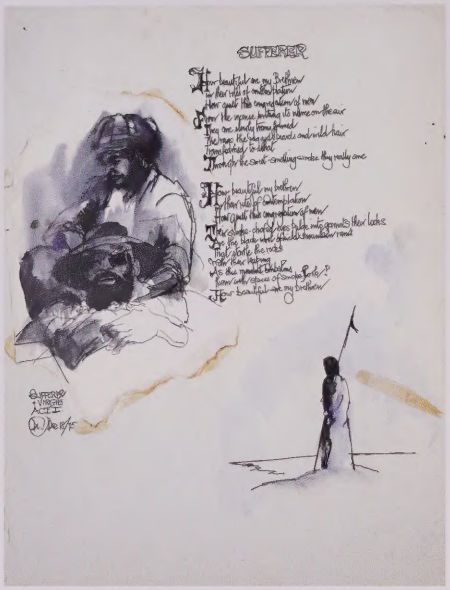
Walcott has always avidly supported Caribbean actors, in particular, though he loves actors in general. At various times throughout his career he has used his own money and resources to support local theatre groups and actors. He writes at least some of his dramatic works with Caribbean actors in mind. He has said that some of the finest Shakespeare he has ever experienced has been performed by Caribbean actors. He credits this in part to the classical training and education they receive in the Caribbean, as well as the theatrical tradition and love of rhetoric, combined with a unique sensitivity to language. "My society loves rhetoric, performance, panache, melodrama, carnival, dressing up, playing roles. Thank God I was born into it, which made me love life and artificial theatre." (p.82, 'Derek Walcott, The Art of Poetry No. 37' Edward Hirsch interview with Derek Walcott in The Paris Review)

O Babylon!, published in 1976 and first performed the same year by the Trinidad Theatre Workshop in Port of Spain, was directed by Walcott with music by Galt MacDermot. *O Babylon!* was later staged in 1988 in London, England. The story centres around events taking place during the 1966 visit to a Rastafarian community in Jamaica by the Emperor Haile Selassie I of Ethiopia. Storylines include a battle with developers trying to force the community from their land to build a luxury tourist hotel, and the conversion of a former criminal, Rufus Johnson, to Rastafarianism, after being treated kindly by the character known as Sufferer and the entire Rastafarian community in a time of need. He later becomes known as Ras Aaron or Brother Aaron. (p. 161, 162, *O Babylon!*):

> … "Now Rufus had this razor
> that him christened 'Mabrak.'
> Him could make it blaze, sir,
> Like lightning slice the dark.
> But who live by the razor
> shall perish by the gun,
> and Rufe, him was a dealer
> in the streets of Babylon …

Rufus is shot in the back by other dealers, to be found by Sufferer, Priscilla and other members of the community and nursed back to health. Priscilla later becomes Aaron's girlfriend:

> "… A Rasta-man called Sufferer,
> an old-bottle collector,
> limp into the alley, with
> four next Rasta-man,
> saying: 'I-and-I shall hide him



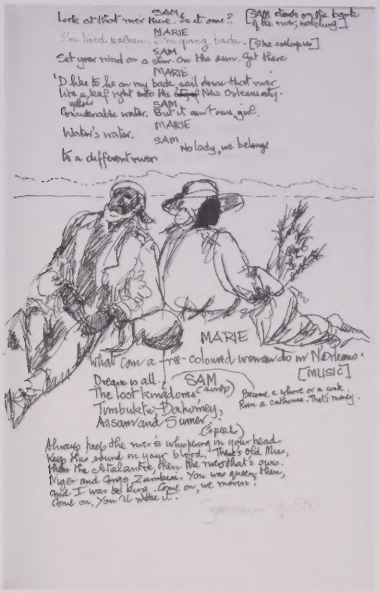
where the Babylon can't find him.
Priscilla, stand beside him.'
And them take him in a van …"

Later Sufferer describes Rufus/Aaron's transformation from dealer to artist (p. 168):

"… That razor shall be turned to a chisel, so
follow your true calling, which is to carve.
Give him the chisel, and the cap with three colors
Of Holy Ethiopia; anoint his stubble
Like the beard of Ras Aaron, which is now his name;
And in the name of the twelve tribes,
I-and-I make this vow, that when we see Zion,
this man, once a criminal, shall stand by I side,
first the oil that embalms his locks,
by the prophecy of Ezekiel 5 …"

Walcott's dramatic work in the United States brought him into contact with the American theatre scene, including the opportunity to work with a number of well-known actors at the start of their careers. Some of these include Angela Bassett (1958-) as Drusilla Douglas in *Beef, No Chicken,* Joan Van Ark (1943-) in *In a Fine Castle* (later reworked and published in 1986, titled *The Last Carnival*) and Frances McDormand (1957-), all at the Yale Repertory Theatre in the early 1980s. Frances McDormand, probably best known for her film work with the Coen brothers, had her first professional acting roles following her time at Yale with the Trinidad Theatre Workshop in Trinidad during the 1980s, starring in plays by Walcott. In 1981, Walcott founded the Boston Playwrights' Theatre during the time he spent teaching at Boston University.

The Royal Shakespeare Company performances of *The*



Odyssey proved a smashing success in 1992 with sold-out London audiences. *The Odyssey* was also very successfully staged at the 2007 Stratford Festival in Stratford, Ontario, starring Walter Borden, Allegra Fulton, Nigel Shawn Williams and Jeremiah Sparks, with direction by Peter Hinton.

Marie Laveau was first performed at St. Thomas, U.S. Virgin Islands in 1979 and at the New Federal Theater in New York in 2009. Excerpts from the play were published in the *Trinidad and Tobago Review* in 1979. *Marie Laveau* is a musical based on the story of the New Orleans religious leader, Marie Laveau (1794-1891), who was known for leading large gatherings in the practice of Voudou [from the Dahomey word for spirit, *vudu*], especially on St. John's Eve, June 23rd, on the shores of Lake Pontchartrain, following Dahomey religious traditions combined with some Catholic beliefs. She was known for her skill in healing, herbalism, divination, counseling and all manner of religious administration, particularly matters dealing with the care of the soul. She was also known to sit with prisoners awaiting their death sentences. One of her daughters, also known as Marie Laveau (1827-ca. 1895), took over as leader when her mother's health began to fail, and the two were sometimes confused. Walcott's play incorporates many aspects of the society of New Orleans at this time, including the lives of former African slaves and the complex multi-racial society, many of whom were devotees of Marie Laveau. For example, Walcott incorporates scenes containing the dance known as Bamboula, brought to New Orleans by African slaves. At the height of her career, Laveau may have had tens of thousands of followers, remaining both an enigma and an important religious and popular figure to this day.

Walcott has written two other plays which reflect events specific to American history, *Walker* and *The Ghost Dance*. *Walker* is about the black abolitionist David Walker (1785-1830), author of *Walker's Appeal* (1829) which urged slaves to resort to violence to obtain their freedom if necessary. *The Ghost Dance* revisits the historical events of the Wounded Knee Massacre of 1890 involving Sitting Bull and the Lakota Sioux attempting to resist the United States Army in the Dakotas. The Ghost Dance was an aboriginal religious movement which was believed to have contributed to the resistance of 1890 and which was banned by the government out of fear of uprisings. The U.S. government broke a treaty with the Lakota Sioux and began to divide up their land, ultimately resulting in the massacre.

The original 1998 production of the highly controversial and financially unsuccessful Broadway musical written by Paul Simon with lyrics by Derek Walcott, *The Capeman,* marked the Broadway debuts of actors Marc Anthony, Ruben Blades, Renoly Santiago, Ednita Nazario, and Sara Ramirez in New York City. *The Capeman* garnered Tony Award nominations for Best Original Score, Best Orchestrations and Best Scenic Design. Ednita Nazario received the World Theatre Award and Renoly Santiago was nominated for a Drama Desk Award for Outstanding Featured Performer in a Musical. Opening to poor reviews and much controversy from the public, the show closed after sixty-eight performances. Hampered almost from the start by production difficulties, excess expense, time lags, differences of opinion, and perhaps Simon's inexperience in creating a Broadway musical, *The Capeman* was one of the least financially successful shows to open on Broadway in recent

history. For differing reasons, the public found the plot objectionable, with some people picketing the theatre. The story focuses on the story of the 1959 New York City murder of two boys by Salvador Agron, a teenage member of a Latino street gang known as The Vampires. Apparently, Agron and gang members set out to attack members of The Norsemen, an Irish gang from Hell's Kitchen, when they mistakenly attacked two boys who were not gang members and killed them. Agron was sixteen years old at the time of the murder, becoming the youngest person ever sentenced to death in the state of New York. For some New Yorkers these murders were still a sensitive subject and not one they cared to see set to music on Broadway. Some members of the Latino community were disappointed that one of the first high-profile musicals on Broadway featuring Latino actors and storyline had to focus on murder and gang members, while others supported the production.

In 1998, Walcott was involved in re-writing parts of the script, originally written by David McKenna (1968-), for the controversial U.S. film *American History X*. First-time feature film director Tony Kaye (1952-) turned to Walcott for help and flew to St. Lucia to consult with him after encountering problems with the script, language, and the film in general. They spent several weeks together working on new dialogue and scenes. A film about racism, neo-nazis, and racial conflict, it was a project plagued with difficulties which eventually proved a great success at the box office.

To Die For Grenada is a play about the United States led invasion of Grenada in October 1983 in an attempt to oust a leftist government. Walcott may have been planning *To Die*

For Grenada as a film since he drew a number of panels and storyboards. He has also written about the invasion of Grenada in his essay, 'Good Old Heart of Darkness'.

Walcott clearly has an ongoing interest in film – a film version of *The Haytian Earth* (1984) was made in St. Lucia with his participation as producer. He narrated and wrote a documentary film for the *Voices and Visions* series on Hart Crane for the New York Center for Visual History in 1995. Walcott also appears in another film made by the New York Center for Visual History, *A Maddening Space* (1999) in conversation with his dear friend, Russian-American poet Joseph Brodsky (1940-1996).

The Trinidad Theatre Workshop was founded in 1959 by Derek Walcott, Roderick Walcott, and a number of well-known performers such as Beryl McBurnie, Errol Jones, Fred Hope, and Joya Gomes-Ryan. Walcott says that he is not the creator of theatre in Trinidad: "There is a very sophisticated culture in the Caribbean that people don't know. To say that I began theater in Trinidad is not true. The only thing I innovated was to form a company and to pay the actors." ('The Passions of Derek Walcott', Patti Hartigan, *The Boston Globe*, April 25, 1993) The mission of the Workshop is to train, develop and produce theatre and actors in the Caribbean to the highest possible standard. Through the Theatre In Education programme, actors, dancers, singers, and others from the workshop offer theatre training to young people, especially those who may not otherwise have been able to afford it. The current director of the Workshop is veteran actor Albert Laveau, who met Walcott during the early days of the troupe. Albert Laveau recalls Walcott paying him ten dollars for an early performance. The Trinidad Theatre Workshop has traveled all over the Caribbean and the world, performing works by Walcott and many others, including *The Blacks,* by Jean Genet (1910-1986), *Belle Fanto,* by Eric Roach (1915-1974), and *The Road* by 1986 Nobel prize laureate Wole Soyinka (1934-). Since its inception, the Workshop has produced some of the best actors and performers in Trinidad and Tobago. Workshop members from the earliest days recall long days, evenings, weekends, and holidays spent rehearsing and

performing. Nearly all had day jobs and family responsibilities to juggle and had to fit in rehearsal where they could. These performers were very dedicated to their craft, and with little or no income, worked purely for the pleasure and satisfaction of being part of something great put on for the community.

The sea plays such a pivotal role in Walcott's work, at times it is like the main character, especially in some of his poetry. Recurring themes in his work include: exile and return, seers and visionaries – especially in the guise of everyday people, i.e. fisherman, peddlers, and the like. Simple, everyday people, especially fishermen and his reverence toward them – often have the best and most important roles. (p. 79-80, *Conversations with Derek Walcott*, Leif Sjöberg):

> "The people I honor and glorify from simplicity, not from a Marxist or political viewpoint, rather say from a Whitmanesque one, are my heroes. Fishermen. Working men, isolated artists... Makak, the main figure in Dream on Monkey Mountain is a man who is tempted into being such a hero. When he awakens from his dream, his wisdom is that he has refused the opportunity. He is himself, not what others would make of him."

The land and the people always play the central role in his work; each piece is based in and around a specific geographic and cultural region. A recurring theme, almost to the point of obsession, is the connection between the Caribbean and Ancient Greece. Walcott revisits this again and again. Each piece, whether poem, play or prose is an homage to place and people, Jamaica, Trinidad, St. Lucia, Ancient Greece, Italy, Grenada, the United States and Haiti.

While he often speaks of exile, he describes himself as not a true exile – he says that someone like Joseph Brodsky is a true exile since he could never return to his homeland whereas Walcott describes himself as more of an 'economic' exile, who can return home at any time he has sufficient money.

Walcott's love of everyday people and the way he tries to honour them in his work is evident as he describes his love of indigenous theatre and the people he admires most in the world: 'In the tropics, nothing is lovelier than the allotments of the poor, no theatre is as vivid, voluble and cheap.' (p. 88, *What the Twilight Says*)

Steel was performed in 1991 in Cambridge, Massachusetts, at the American Repertory Theater's New Stages series. The Trinidad Theatre Workshop also mounted a major production of *Steel* in 2005. *Steel,* dedicated to Roddy, and the Turks Steel Band, is the story of two competing steel pan bands in Trinidad, specifically from the Port of Spain neighbourhood known as Laventille. Founded by freed African slaves in the 1800s, Laventille was historically known for the excellence of its steel pan bands and musicians and is considered the spiritual home of steel pan. It was and is also a very poor neighbourhood, with a history of violence and conflict with police stretching to the present day. During the time of slavery in Trinidad, there was also a plantation by the name of Laventille.

The Hill

The hill
The hill
Sundays so sweet on the hill
a steel pan practicing one
tune/over
and over
down in the yard
While pigeon flocks
Wheel overhead
Come back Africa
Bring me piece of mind
While pigeon flocks wheel
Close your eyes
Sounding nice

Originally, steel pans were made from fifty-five gallon discarded oil drums. One of the more famous steel pan bands from this area is the Trinidad Tripoli Steelband, which gained world wide fame and toured with Liberace (ironically, for a time they were known as the Esso Trinidad Tripoli Steelband, following sponsorship from Esso). In Walcott's musical, two bands, the Bandidos and the Desperadoes, are competing both musically, and sometimes physically, for primacy in the region. There is a real steel pan band from Laventille called the Desperadoes Steel Orchestra, or Despers, for short. The real life Desperadoes took their name from a Glenn Ford movie that was playing at the time. Violence between bands was not unknown, especially in the early days of steel pan. The story of *Steel* is set during the 1930s and 1940s and traces the experiences of a musician who turns from the piano to steel pan, an obvious metaphor for the colonial/post-colonial experience, set against a backdrop of World War II. The story is quite complex and incorporates many aspects of Trinidadian life and culture. The Walcott papers include numerous sketches, drawings and watercolours illustrating Walcott's visual conceptions of the play, as well as scripts and drafts. Below, the lyrics to the song, 'Were You There?' from *Steel*, as sung by the calypsonian character Growler (played by Albert Laveau in the 2005 Trinidad Theatre Workshop production, music by Galt MacDermot), about the end of the Second World War and the early development of steel pan music:

Were You There

Were you there?
Were you there
The night that peace declare?
Were you there
Were you there
On the night that peace declare?
Adolf Hitler gone
Mussolini bawl
And Hirohito hiding in the hospital
It was down in Belmont Eli heard a bugle
People running, screaming that 'Peace declare!
Three cheers for the American Eagle
The British Lion and the Russian Bear,'
He was heading for the docks on the graveyard shift
When he heard a noise down Observatory Street,
Fellers beating old iron, well, Eli lift
A dustbin cover and he start to beat.
No tune, just percussion, so he dent the pan,
He hammer two notes and them notes sound sweet
And is from that melody that steel began,
So that Pan victory was Japan defeat.'

Later in the play, during a calypso competition, Growler laments his waning fame as a performer:

I send a suit to the tailor
About a month in advance
You know he send me the jacket
But he hold on to the pants
In the days of my glory
It just wasn't so

It was a different story
When I was King of Calypso
Those days it was: Growler's
Monarch's Melody.
Tonight, where me trousers?
They in custody …

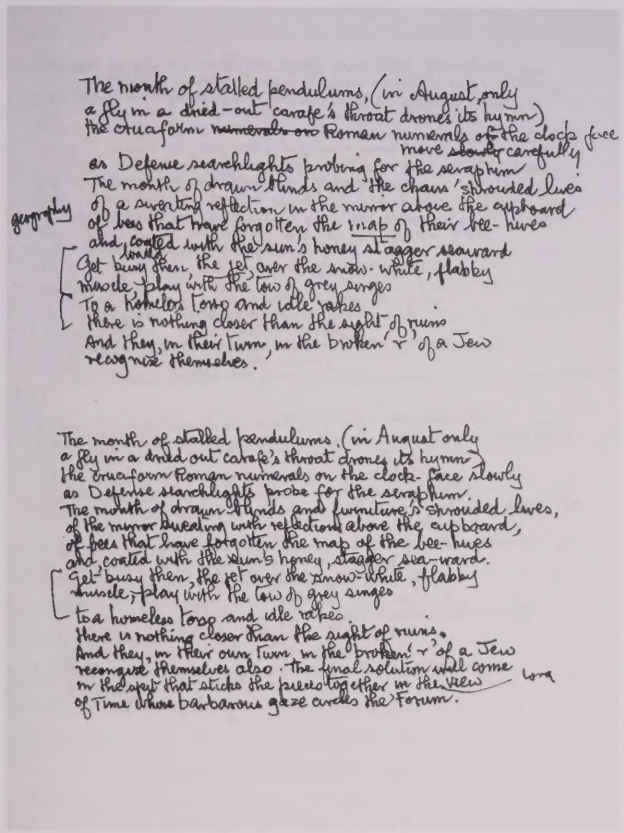
This is the height of poverty
for the desperate and black;
climbing, we could look back
with widening memory
on the hot, corrugated-iron sea
whose horrors we all shared …

Laventille and the people who live there are obviously close to Walcott's heart as he has also written a poem about the neighbourhood, included in the 1965 *The Castaway and other poems*.

Laventille

Below bent breadfruit trees
in the flat, coloured city, class
escalated into structures still,
merchant, middleman, magistrate, knight. To go downhill
from here was to ascend.
The middle passage never guessed its end.

Walcott has been married and divorced three times, to Fay Moston, Margaret Maillard, and Norline Metivier. Since 1987, Walcott's partner has been Sigrid Nama, a Danish-American art dealer. He has three children, Peter, Elizabeth and Anna. Not surprisingly, Derek Walcott has many good friends in the United States and the rest of the world, including poets, editors, artists and musicians. One of his great friendships was with the Russian-American poet Joseph Brodsky. Walcott and Brodsky met at the American poet Robert Lowell's funeral in 1977, with whom both had been friends separately, but did not know each other at the time. Brodsky was supposed to meet and travel to the Lowell funeral in


The month of stalked pendulums, (in August only
a fly in a dried-out carafe's throat drones its hymn)
the cruciform ~~numerals on~~ Roman numerals of the clock face
move slowly carefully
as Defense searchlights probing for the seraphim
The mouth of drawn blinds and the chairs' shrouded lives
of a averting reflection in the mirror above the cupboard
geography of bees that have forgotten the map of their bee-hives
and coated with the sun's honey stagger seaward
Get busy then, the jet over the snow-white, flabby
muscle, play with the tow of grey angels
To a homeless torso and idle rakes
There is nothing closer than the sight of ruins
And they, in their turn, in the broken 'r' of a Jew
recognize themselves.

The month of stalked pendulums. (in August only
a fly in a dried out carafe's throat drones its hymn)
the cruciform Roman numerals on the clock-face slowly
as Defense searchlights probe for the seraphim.
The mouth of drawn blinds and furniture's shrouded lives,
of the mirror brooding with reflection above the cupboard,
of bees that have forgotten the map of the bee-hives
and coated with the sun's honey, stagger sea-ward.
Get busy then, the jet over the snow-white, flabby
muscle, play with the tow of grey angels
to a homeless torso and idle rakes
there is nothing closer than the sight of ruins.
And they, in their own turn, in the broken 'r' of a Jew
recognize themselves also. The final solution will come
in the spit that sticks the pieces together in the view long
of Time whose barbarous gaze circles the Forum.

Boston with Walcott, author Susan Sontag (1933-2004), and Roger Straus (1917-2004) of Farrar, Straus and Giroux. The three waited for Brodsky at the airport but he did not appear. Walcott says that Brodsky sat down next to him at the funeral in the same pew and that later they formally met, forming the beginnings of an intimate and important friendship. Walcott's poem, 'Forest of Europe' is dedicated to Joseph Brodsky.
(Excerpts from Forest of Europe:)

There is a Gulag Archipelago
under this ice, where the salt, mineral spring
of the long Trail of Tears runnels these plains
as hard and open as a herdsman's face
sun-cracked and stubbled with unshaven snow.

Growing in whispers from the Writers' Congress,
the snow circles like cossacks round the corpse
of a tired Choctaw till it is a blizzard
of treaties and white papers as we lose
sight of the single human through the cause …

The tourist archipelagoes of my South
are prisons too, corruptible, and though
there is no harder prison than writing verse,
what's poetry, if it is worth its salt,
but a phrase men can pass from hand to mouth?

From hand to mouth, across the centuries,
the bread that lasts when systems have decayed,
when, in his forest of barbed-wire branches,
a prisoner circles, chewing the one phrase
whose music will last longer than the leaves …

Brodsky credits Walcott with the translation of his poem, 'Letters from the Ming Dynasty', published in *The New Yorker* in 1980 and read by Walcott at *The New Yorker* festival. Walcott has said that this was typical of Brodsky's overly generous nature to share credit, and that he worked with Brodsky and a Russian translator on the poem.
(Excerpt from Letters From the Ming Dynasty)

…Wind blows us westward like the yellow tares
From a dried pod, there where the Wall towers.
Against it man's figure is ugly and stiff as a frightening
hieroglyph,
As any illegible scripture at which one stares.

This pull in one direction only has made
Me something elongated, like a horse's head,
And all the body should do is spent by its shadow
Rustling across the wild barley's withered blade.

Brodsky has written of Walcott: "For almost forty years his throbbing and relentless lines kept arriving in the English language like tidal waves, coagulating into an archipelago of poems without which the map of modern literature would effectively match wallpaper. He gives us more than himself or 'a world'; he gives us a sense of infinity embodied in the language." Joseph Brodsky was exiled from Russia to New York City in 1972, having been expelled by the government as a subversive, following years of incarceration in mental hospitals and prisons for political reasons. Russian friends say that Brodsky was one of the most apolitical poets they knew. Brodsky, who represents an important link in the Russian and East European literary tradition, has spoken of his 'literary-grandparents', the poets Anna Akhmatova (1889-1966), Marina Tsvetaeva (1892-1941), Osip Mandelstam (1891-1938), Boris Pasternak (1890-1960) and Czesław Miłosz (1911-2004). He was a close friend of Akhmatova's as a young man and pall-bearer at her funeral. She was instrumental in securing his release from prison shortly before her death in 1966 and his exile to the United States. Brodsky died in 1996 in New York and Walcott was one of the readers at his funeral, along with other close friends such as Czesław Miłosz and Mikhail Barishnikov (1948-).

A third poet was added to this incredible friendship in New York City in the form of Irish poet Seamus Heaney (1939-). Walcott says that he became friends with Heaney following the appearance of a nasty review of Heaney's work. Walcott was outraged and sent Heaney a soothing note, "with a little obscenity" through his publisher to support him. They eventually became good friends. The essay, *Heaney in Ireland* is about Walcott's visit to Ireland and an homage to the life and work of his friend.

> 'The peace of Ireland was passing by on the drive, and what was centrally contained in Seamus' poetry was also passing through and permanent, the window-glass. The tight coil of his lines, on which the words cluster like berries eaten one at a time, and along which there is a close-leaved thickening that, stripped like a rod would still show a live and pliant branch, the small walled fields, the morning rain on the grey lake, the tight cottages and the old trees of the dipping road to Derry were confirming the verse. The verse and the voice itself.'

Walcott, Brodsky and Heaney all lived in New York for a time within a short distance of one another and would frequently get together for long sessions. All three were Nobel laureates, poets, exiles of one type or another, and good friends. The three collaborated on the book, *Homage to Robert Frost*, in 1997. Walcott describes the trio as being outside the American experience (p. 16, Hirsch interview):

> "... Seamus is Irish, Joseph is Russian, I'm West Indian. We don't get embroiled in the controversies about who's a soft poet, who's a hard poet, who's a free-verse poet, who's not a poet, and all of that. It's good to be on the rim of that quarreling. We're on the perimeter of the American literary scene ..."

Walcott says that he began as an admirer of Robert Lowell and Elizabeth Hardwick (1916-2007), founders of *The New York Review of Books*, later becoming close friends with both. Lowell

once told him that 'he should put more of himself in his poems'.

Below an excerpt from Walcott's appreciation for Hardwick following her death in 2007:

> For Elizabeth Hardwick
>
> 'Distance requires formality, but I cannot be distant writing about Lizzie Hardwick since everything has come alarmingly closer – the curls, the infectious chuckle, the drawl like poured-out honey, the privilege of sharing her astute delight, and the benign devastations of her wit. Because she hated pomposity she was more fun than any American writer I have known ... You felt that she wrote for you, you hoped that those brilliant monologues of the best prose writer in America would not ever reach a period but you also knew that she would outlast it.'

Some other close American friends of Walcott's include Charles Simic (1938-), poetry editor at *The Paris Review* and Poet Laureate to the Library of Congress in 2007, Jonathan Galassi (1949-), President and Publisher of Farrar, Straus and Giroux, Polish New Wave poet Adam Zagajewski (1945-), editor Pat Strachan (formerly of Farrar, Straus and Giroux) and Alice Quinn of *The New Yorker*. He has also many dear friends in the Caribbean, Canada, and the rest of the world, including Professors J. Edward 'Ted' Chamberlin (1943-) and Edward Baugh (1936-), who together nominated him for the Nobel Prize; Jamaican poet and artist Lorna Goodison (1947-), and the late Rex Nettleford (1933-2010).

Walcott has written numerous essays, reviews, critiques and appreciations of other writers, including a tribute to Arthur Miller (1915-2005); a review of the work of Cuban-American writer Guillermo Cabrera Infante (1929-2005), as well as essays on Ernest Hemingway (1899-1961), Jorge Luis Borges (1889-1986), and Ted Hughes (1930-1998).

Walcott has had a long and complex relationship with Trinidadian writer and 2001 Nobel prize laureate V.S. Naipaul (1932-), much of it in the public eye. He dedicated his 1965 poem 'Laventille' to Naipaul and during their early days appeared to be on generally friendly terms. In a 1965 letter to Ronald Bryden, Walcott comments on Naipaul, '... last saw him at a dinner given by him at his sister's house, where he had held forth, quite high. I like the little runt, but O Gord he overbearing sometimes. Maiden aunt, accent on maiden...' and further on he jokes about being in Naipaul's next book, 'An Area of Light: Petit Valley Revisited: Being Conversations and Reminiscences With Derek Walcott, as distorted through my fiendish Oriental Gaze, With an appendix and thorax on Ronald Bryden, Critic and Snubber of Dinner Invitations (Andre Deutsch: 18 Guineas with photographs by Lilo Raymond)...' Over the years, enmity and public animosity increased, with Walcott at times launching attacks on Naipaul through verse, sometimes vicious, sometimes humorous – his character V. S. Nightfall is a thinly veiled Naipaul in the poem 'The Spoiler's Return' in *The Fortunate Traveller*, and the vitriolic 'The Mongoose', which Walcott performed orally in Jamaica. He takes issue with Naipaul's harsh and pessimistic view of Trinidad and the Caribbean in general, as well as his overly positive attitude towards former colonial powers, and his lack of support and respect for the place he was born.

The pathos evident in all of Walcott's work is the basis for his inspiration. His work reflects the experience of himself and those around him, always celebrating the simple, everyday person. Clearly, Walcott is motivated by *agape,* or love, for the people around him – love of culture, self, place, and language.

Love After Love

The time will come
when, with elation
you will greet yourself arriving
at your own door, in your own mirror
and each will smile at the other's welcome,

and say, sit here. Eat.
You will love again the stranger who was your self.
Give wine. Give bread. Give back your heart
to itself, to the stranger who has loved you

all your life, whom you ignored
for another, who knows you by heart.
Take down the love letters from the bookshelf,

the photographs, the desperate notes,
peel your own image from the mirror.
Sit. Feast on your life.

SOURCES FOR THE EXHIBITION

Unless otherwise stated, all material in this exhibition is from the Derek Walcott papers, the Margaret Stollmeyer papers, the Trinidad Theatre Workshop papers, the Ronald Bryden papers, and the J. Edward Chamberlin papers all held by the Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library, University of Toronto. Some items have been borrowed from a private collector.

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'The Passions of Derek Walcott', by Patti Hartigan was first published in *The Boston Globe*, April 25, 1993.

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CASE ONE:
Omeros screenplay storyboard pages

CASE TWO:
The Nobel Prize and awards

CASE THREE:
Steel watercolours

CASE FOUR:
Notebooks

CASE FIVE:
Tiepolo's Hound notes and drafts

CASE SIX:
Production photographs
Beef, No Chicken; O Babylon!; In a Fine Castle; Dream on Monkey Mountain; A Branch of the Blue Nile, including Angela Bassett and Joan Van Ark in Yale Repertory Theater productions

CASE SEVEN:
Trinidad Theatre Workshop

CASE EIGHT:
O Babylon! colour pastel and ink drawings, 1970s

MACLEAN HUNTER ROOM:

On walls: drawings and paintings from *O Babylon!, Marie Laveau, Steel, The Odyssey, The Capeman, The Last Carnival*

First case: correspondence

Second case: correspondence

Corner cabinet: books

Corner cabinet: Joseph Brodsky material

On south wall: Derek Walcott banners from Taipei, Taiwan

Large case, south wall: tickets, programmes, magazines

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